

2011-12 National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) Key Points

Overview

1. CDC established National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond. This season's NIVW is scheduled for December 4-10, 2011.
 - a. Flu vaccination coverage has shown that historically vaccination activity drops quickly after the end of November. CDC and its partners want to dispel the myth that vaccination beyond the holidays is "too late."
 - b. As long as flu viruses are spreading and causing illness, vaccination should continue and can provide protection against the flu. Even unvaccinated people who have already gotten the flu can still benefit from vaccination since the flu vaccine protects against three different flu viruses and more than one flu virus circulates each season. Last season, all three influenza viruses in the vaccine circulated widely in the United States.
2. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
3. While flu vaccine is not 100% effective, it offers the best protection we have against this serious disease.
4. NIVW efforts will focus on reaching people of all ages about the importance of ongoing flu vaccination.
5. Another goal of NIVW is to communicate the importance of vaccines for people who are at high risk for developing flu-related complications.
 - a. People at high risk for developing serious flu complications include young children, people 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes (type 1 and type 2), heart disease, neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, blood disorders, morbid obesity, kidney and liver disorders, HIV or AIDS, and cancer.
 - b. A full list of "People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications" is available at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm

Vaccination

1. Despite the unpredictable nature of the flu, you should know:
 - a. You need an annual flu vaccine for optimal protection.
 - b. You need the 2011-12 flu vaccine to protect against flu this season.
 - c. Yearly vaccination is needed because:
 - i. Flu viruses are always changing and the vaccine composition may change from one season to the next, and
 - ii. Immune protection from vaccination declines over time so annual vaccination is recommended for optimal protection.

- d. At this time, this season's vaccine is well matched to the flu strains circulating in the United States, so this season's vaccine is expected to provide good protection against most influenza illness.
 - e. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for the body's immune response to fully kick in.
 - f. Flu activity *usually* peaks in January or February in the United States and can last as late as May. As long as flu season isn't over, it's not too late to get vaccinated.
 - g. With flu activity increasing and family and friends gathering for the holidays, now is a great time to get a flu vaccine to protect yourself and your loved ones.
2. NIVW serves as an important reminder to parents and caregivers of children about the importance of vaccination in general and the fact that some children may need two doses of vaccine this season to be fully protected. Children younger than 9 years old getting vaccinated for the first time, or those who did not receive at least one dose of last year's (2010-2011) influenza vaccine (even if they did receive two doses in an earlier season) will need two doses of vaccine this season to be fully protected. The first dose primes the immune system and acts as a "booster" to provide the best possible protection.
- a. If your child has not received a first dose of flu vaccine, get his/her first dose of vaccine *now*.
 - b. If your child is younger than 9 and has been vaccinated with one dose, make sure he/she gets a second dose if recommended by the child's doctor.
3. Vaccine supplies are ample and there are more choices than ever available this year, both in terms of where to get vaccinated and what vaccine to get.
4. This season, the regular flu shot is available along with the nasal spray vaccine. There also is a "high-dose" vaccine for people 65 and older and an intradermal vaccine with a much smaller needle that is approved for use in people 18 to 64 years old.
5. Millions of doses of influenza vaccine have been delivered to people safely for decades.
6. Once vaccinated, you can enjoy this holiday season knowing that you have taken the single best step to protect yourself and your loved ones against the flu. Remember, the "Flu Ends With U". Get a flu vaccine, not the flu.